



*Happy Birthday Florida!
So Grateful,
To have been blessed
with
this
Precious Gift.*

In 1941, Floridians stepped out of the shadows of Alcoholism, and were given the opportunity to walk in the sunlight of the Spirit.





Dr. Bob Smith

Bill Wilson



World War I Trench Soldiers



The First World War began on 28 July 1914 and lasted until 11 November 1918



Bill Wilson

Then came the great Stock market crash, dust bowl and ultimate Depression Era.



The Depression ran from 1929 until the late 30's. Alcoholics Anonymous was born when the men had reached their bottom.

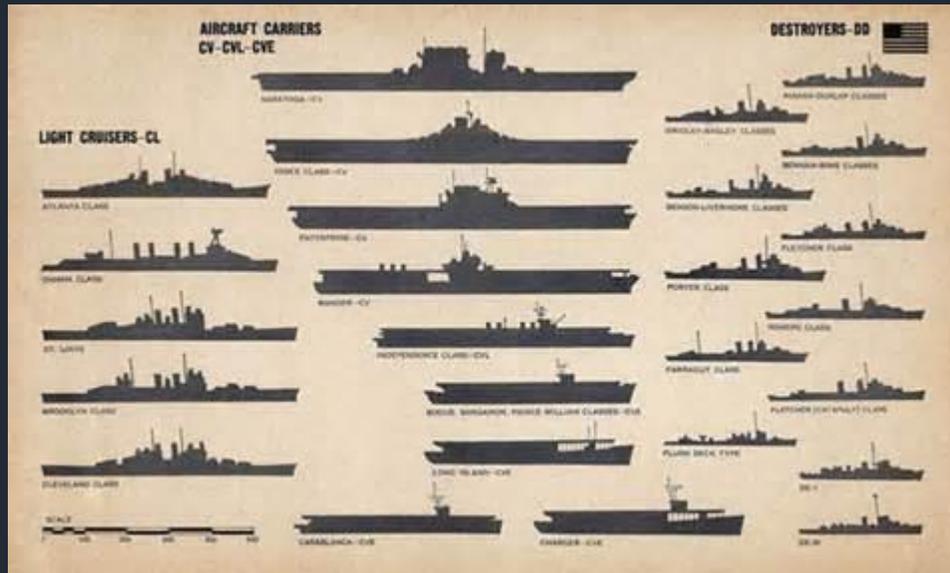


World War II, also known as the Second World War, was a global war that lasted from 1939 to 1945



USS Saratoga CV-3
Junius Cotton service ship when
entering Avionics field.





The World War & United States Navy would play a part in bringing our founding members together.



**Early Al-Anon Family Group Logo
circa 1952 when it moved from
“Stepping Stones” Bill & Lois’
home to the 24th street clubhouse.**

**Of the two founding members of Florida
Junius Cotten’s 2nd wife was quite
instrumental in assisting her husband.
Even before she had the guidance of our
wonderful sister fellowship. She was a
great asset for Junius contacting GSO in
1939 and requesting one of those first run
“circus edition” Big Books called
Alcoholics Anonymous.**



1939 First Edition goes to print

Junius Lee Cotton

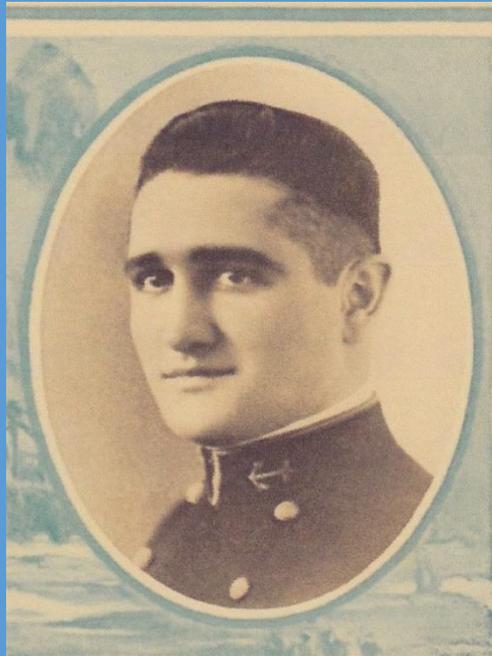
and

Tom A. Sharpe



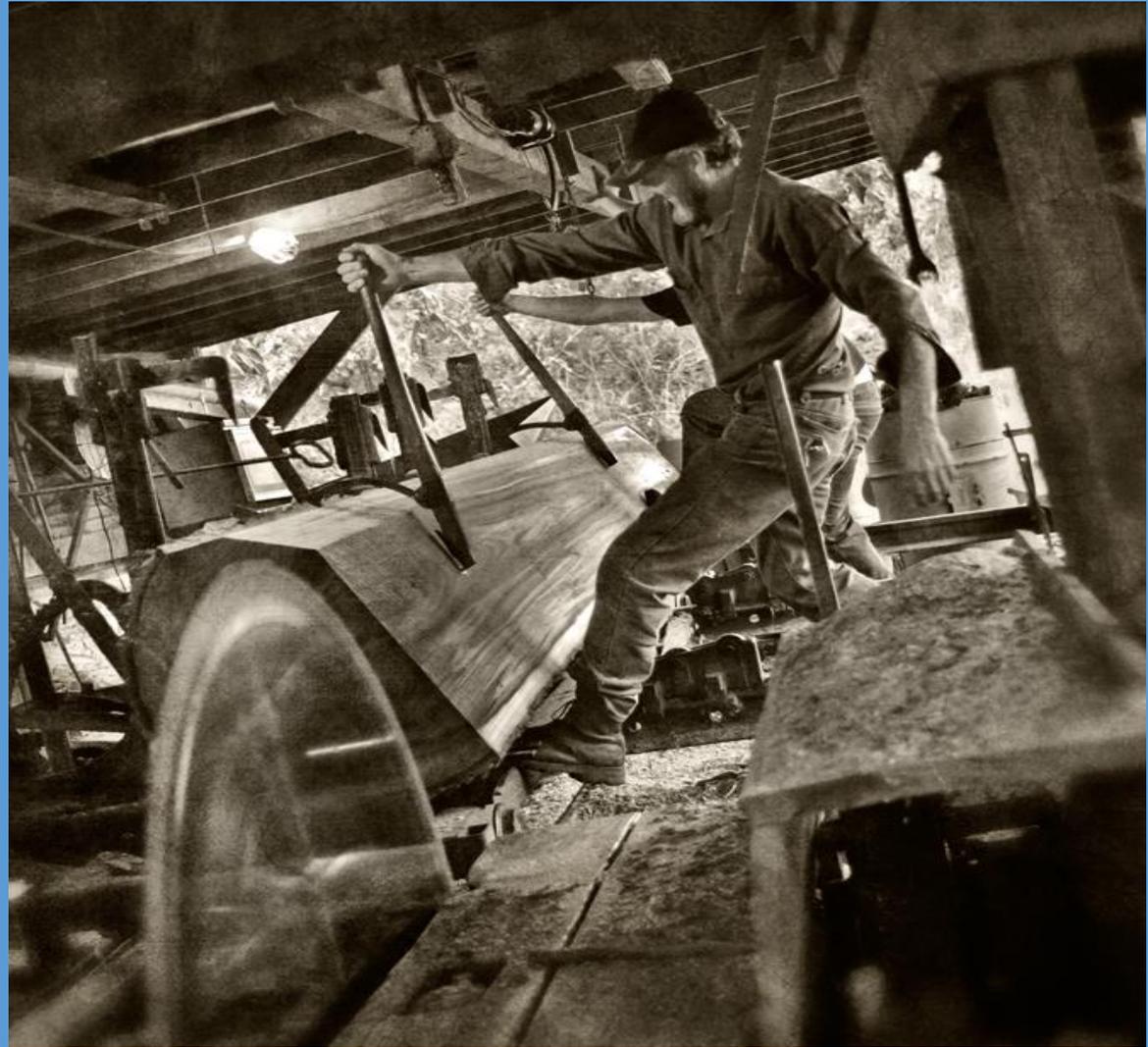
Florida's original Alcoholics Anonymous Founding members

Junius cotton, born 1895 in
McComb Mississippi





McComb City Hospital Building in MS.



one of three brothers, Junius grew up without a Father. He died in a sawmill accident in 1897 and his Mother ran a rooming house to support the family going forward.



Mississippi sawmills in the 1800's, rough & tough profession & time period to grow up in.



JUNIUS LEE COTTEN

McComb, Mississippi

"Junius" "Spig" "Chunky"

Class Football Squad (13); Buzzard; Battalion Staff, P. O.



HE has all the beautiful sylph-like stream lines of an Erie Canal boat with about the same maneuvering ability, tactical diameter, and adaptability for high speeds. His pivoting point is approximately thirty feet ahead of him; just two things can cut down that abominable "advance" of his. Hail him from somewheres on his beam and he's gone a block before he can put the helm over and join you. But let him sight a skag or a girl on any bearing whatever and he'll slip his mooring and proceed under forced draft, with a beautiful disregard for nearby shipping that at times has driven us to desperation.

You may deduce that Spig is from the South, in which case you win. He belongs to Mississippi, whence we import our cotton, sugar cane, and northern mess hall mokes.

Spig entered rather late in plebe summer, and became conspicuous for his habitual need of a shave and famous for his "box car" stories. At the beginning of academic year he succumbed to the charms of Sister Kennedy, who, until her academic demise at second class semi-ans, protected him from the wicked world. Since then he and that wild Dutchman, Kreuger, have formed a team, which for symmetry of form puts to shame a pair of draught horses.

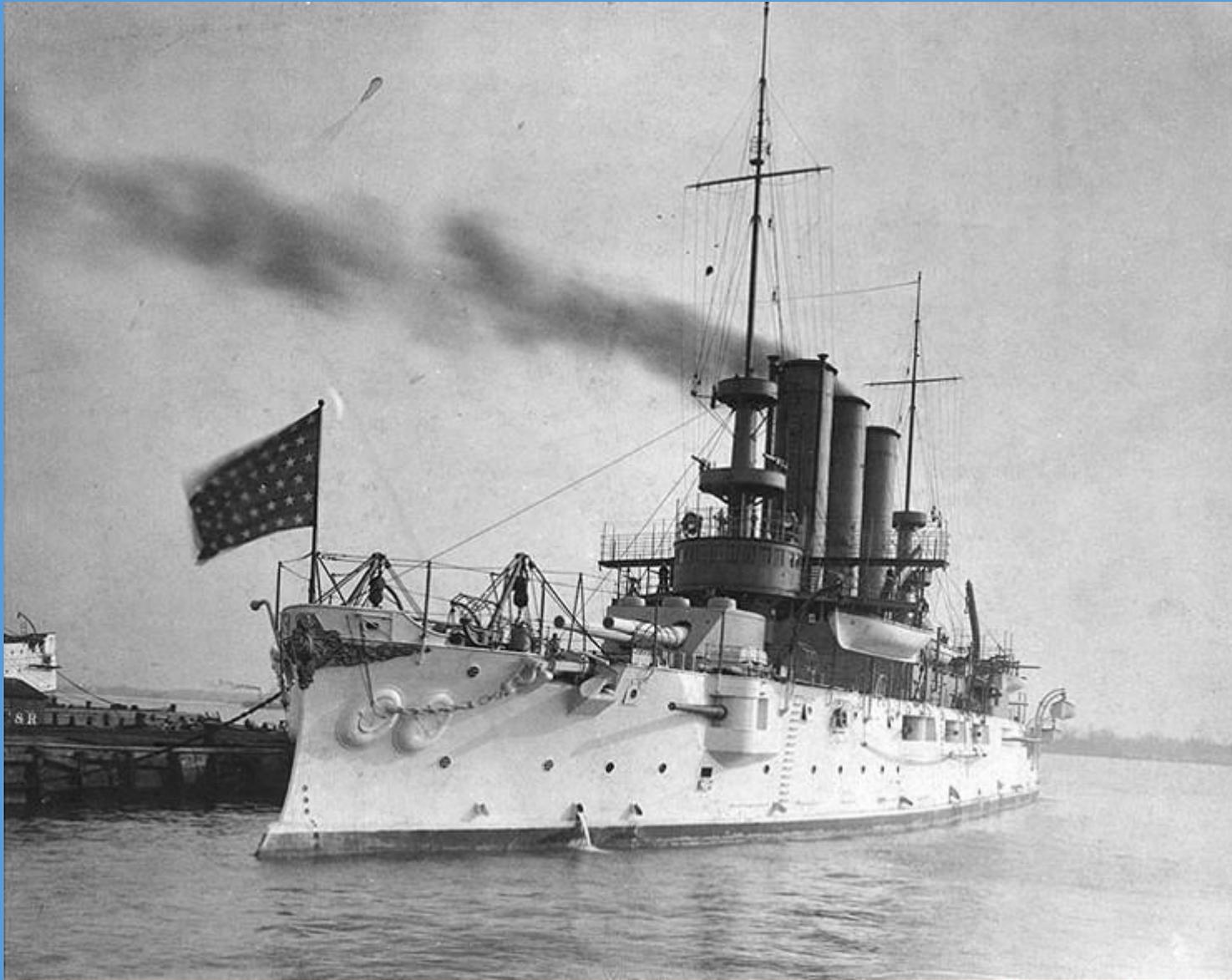
Plebe year Chunky played football until he landed in the hospital. In the Spring he labored daily on the Crew Squad, which season marked the end of his athletic aspirations. These conscientious efforts were mainly due to the insistence of the first class, who were determined to make him work. Since then, he has been resting from his exertions. At resting he holds the heavyweight championship of the academy.

The Chasser is a hard worker when it comes to boning, and what he lacks in ability to bluff his profs he makes up by solid work; not entirely in accord with Spig's idea of life, but always there when imminent danger of collision exists.

"Come along heah now. I'll lick the bof a you."



Junius C. went and joined the Navy. He graduated from the US Naval Academy in Annapolis in 1917 and served on the Battleship Maine. He was married in 1920 and transferred to Naval aviation in 1923.



Junius C. first deployment in U.S. Navy was aboard the USS Maine.

USS Maine in early 1900's



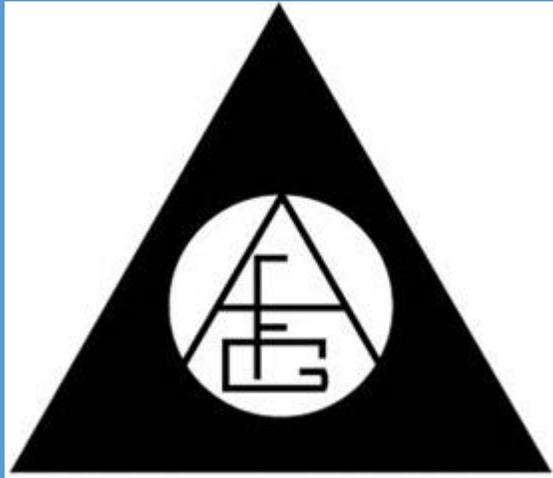
The USS Saratoga in the early days (20's & 30's) This was the aircraft carrier Junius was employed on when switching to avionics.



Sailor playing Taps

Eventually Junius's Alcoholism caught up with him. His Navy career was going up in smoke so in 1939 he decided to take an early retirement. This was mostly due to his heavy drinking. He then retired in Pasadena, Calif.



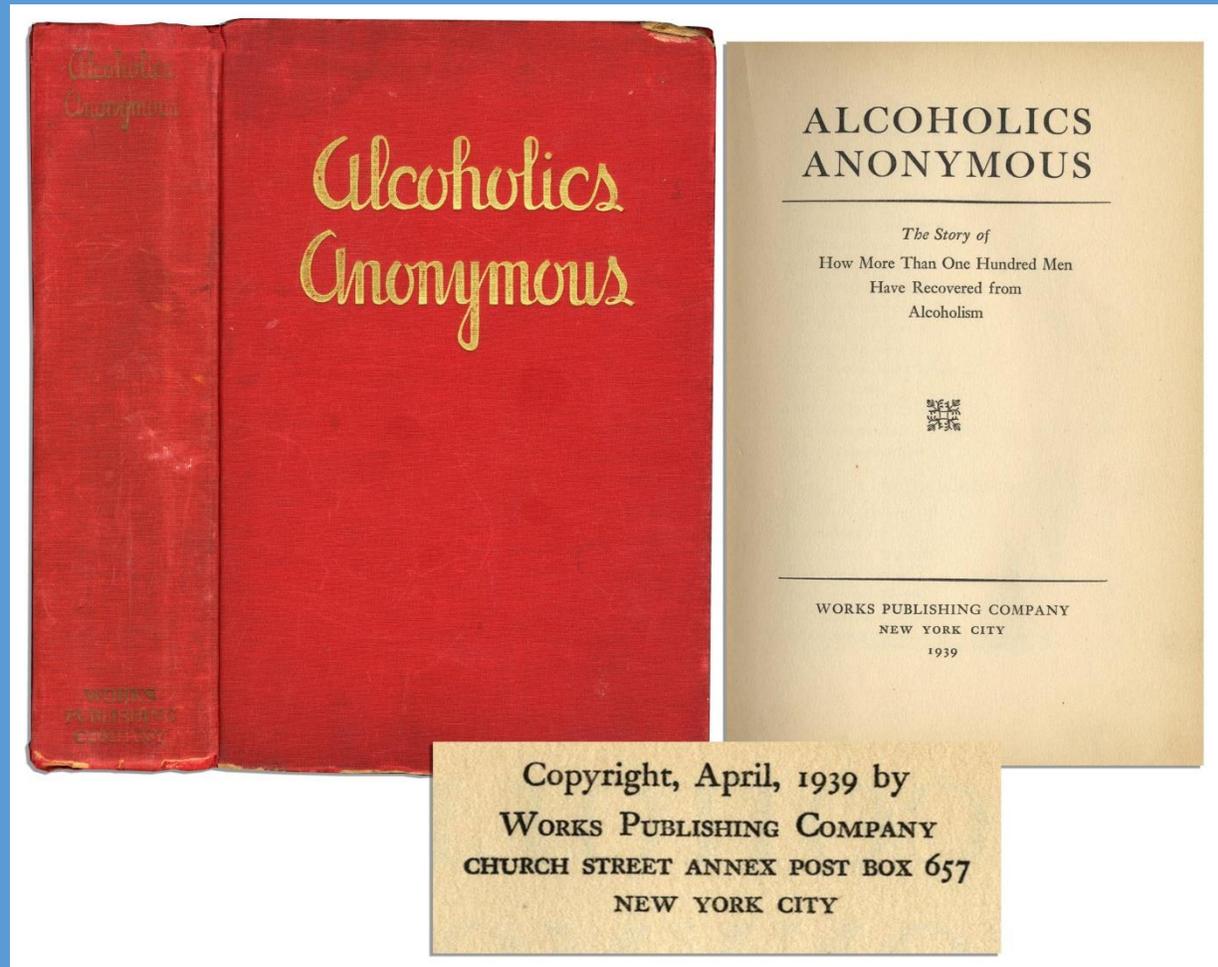



Al-Anon Family Groups
Strength and hope for friends and families of problem drinkers

Even though early Al-Anon was just beginning to form; Junius' 2nd wife Marie realized that alcoholism was a "family disease". Marie was instrumental in her husband's recovery.

She not only wrote to Bill Wilson & Ruth Hock in New York.

But purchased the first edition Big Book for her husband in 1939.



84—Main Gate, U. S. Naval Air Station, Jacksonville, Fla.



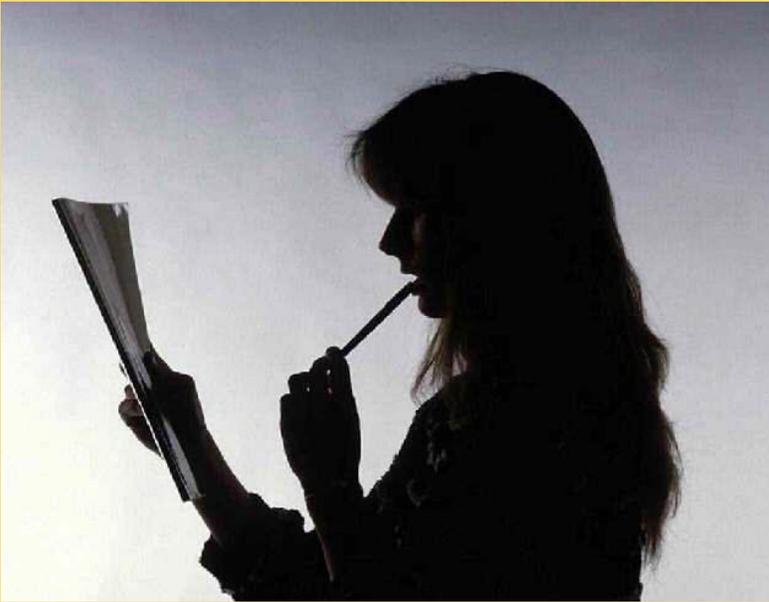
Main Gate NAS JAX, circa 1940

With the onset of World War 2, retired Naval Officer Commander Junius Cotten was recalled back into service. He was sent out from California to the recently built Naval Air Station in Jacksonville.

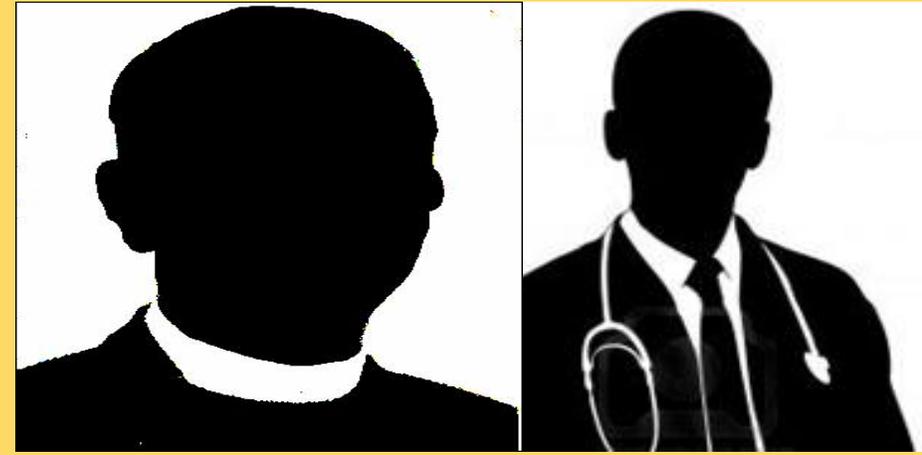
Administration Building, U. S. Naval Air Station, Jacksonville, Florida J44



Admin. Building U.S. Naval Air Station, This is where Junius would have checked into base for his "NEW" assignment....



Marie (Junius 2nd wife) was once again instrumental in his recovery. With Junius now having to go back to the Navy where he had so many alcoholic problems associated with it. She was certain her husband would require some help with this problem, and went to the base dispensary where she contacted local physician Fr. Sullivan G. Bedell.



Dr. Sullivan G. Bedell

Was both a Father & a physician working at the NAS dispensary. He would help Marie find an alcoholic prospect for Junius. Dr. Bedell was the perfect man for this kind of spiritual job.



NAS Jax during the 1940's
The base opened Oct 15, 1940



Dr. Bedell set up a meeting between Commander Junius Cotton & Tom Sharpe his alcoholic patient in December of 1940. The two men made their initial meeting in the officers Quarters on base. Similar to the gatehouse meeting in Bill W. & Dr. Bob story.



Tom Sharpe was born in Darlington, South Carolina in 1904, but grew up in Jacksonville, Florida. Graduated from Georgia Tech and was a salesman, avid golfer and sports enthusiast. He had many sales jobs and worked hard until his drinking caused problems and he quit before getting fired. During the depression jobs became a problem and in 1940 he was unemployable. He went to many sanitariums to “dry out” but usually drank on the way home. Dr. Bedell was an unforeseen blessing in Tom’s “Way of Life”!



The very first A.A. meeting place in Florida was held in this home. Circa 1941 in Jacksonville, FL. The commemorative historical society brass plaque, (mounted near the left side of front door) was presented on May 03, 2014

FIRST AA MEETING

JANUARY 1941

IN FLORIDA



This meeting was the rental property Tom had at 2747 Riverside Ave. Jacksonville Fl.

The original “first meeting” group of Tom’s friends was attended by Tom F., Henry R., Charles B. and Karl K. Of course none of Tom’s friends were truly interested in sobriety so that group had little success.

April 1941 Jacksonville Journal



In April of 1941 Tom Sharpe went to the Jacksonville Journal and spoke with city editor, telling him of the National A.A. movement and what they were doing locally. As a result an article written by Lowel Lucas appeared in the April 19th edition. All inquiries that came in to newspaper were given to Tom Sharpe. These people asking questions....were truly interested.... And as a result! The Central Group of A.A. was started!

34—Hotel Windsor, Jacksonville, Fla.



The original group were then offered a room in the Windsor Hotel and held weekly meetings there for sometime. Then they were able to rent a room on 2nd floor of 330 W. Forsythe st. They stayed a year & held meetings with a club room also. There were atleast 9 members including Cotton & Sharpe. This is when Commander Cotton was transferred to Newport, Rhode Island and later retired as Captain in 1946. After a year larger quarters were needed, and by 1945 the first offshoot group was formed "The Fellowship Group" At that time ACOAN, Inc. was formed to hold property & act as agent for A.A. Thomas A. Sharpe was president & JL Andrews was secretary/Treasurer.



The Hotel Seminole was one used for one of the early AA meetings in Florida in 1942.

Bill Wilson actually spoke here.

Bill W's first trip to Jacksonville was in early 1942. The reason for his trip was to visit the Jacksonville Group and speak with one of it's first members, Bruce H. Bruce was a promoter who had Gulf Life Insurance Company give him 10 radio spots 3 to 4 minutes in length to discuss AA. His spots were very successful and many people came to AA. He wanted to expand the radio program nationally and received backing from Prudential and Metropolitan Life insurance Companies. He wrote many letters to the Foundation stating his intent and his answer was a visit from Bill W. Tom S met Bill at the train station and they went to meet Bruce. Bruce never did another radio spot for AA in Jacksonville. After the meeting Bill spoke for the first time in Jacksonville at the Seminole Hotel for 20 to 25 people. Dinner cost \$1.25. This was the first of many times Bill spoke in Jacksonville.

Jacksonville Group By-Laws

This information was taken from the original copy of the by-laws of the Jacksonville Group in 1943. The group was at that time meeting in the Windsor and Seminole Hotels in Jacksonville Florida.

This information was donated by Tom Sharp to the GSO archives.

Jacksonville Group By-Laws (cont)

“THE PRIMARY PURPOSE” of the group shall be to maintain the sobriety of it's members and to carry this message only to those alcoholics who definitely maintain that they want this program after it has been thoroughly presented to them.

Jacksonville Group By-Laws (cont)

1. A permanent secretary who shall conduct the meetings and select a leader in advance, shall serve at the will of the revolving committee.
2. A revolving committee of three shall be elected by secret ballot, one of whom is to be replaced every three months.
3. The membership shall be limited to men. New members shall be admitted by invitation only extended by the approval of the secretary with the approval of all members.
4. New applicants may be sponsored by members of this group only.
5. A roster of members, addresses and telephone numbers shall be kept by the secretary.
6. One meeting is to be held each week for members and their wives, only. The meeting place shall be separate and apart from any other group. All guests must be members of AA and may attend on invitation of a member, subject, if necessary, to approval of the revolving committee.

Jacksonville Group By-Laws (cont)

7. A member may be “resigned” from the roster by the revolving committee if it appears to be for the best interests of the group.
8. Anonymity must be respected and preserved in accordance with the AA tradition.
9. No prospective member shall attend a meeting until the program has been explained and he has read the AA book. He must admit his alcoholism, his belief in a higher power and his desire to fully except this program.
10. This group shall not finance any hospitalization, loan or donation to any person or group. Each member is requested to pay to the secretary \$1.00 per year for National Headquarters.
11. The group shall provide for the sale of the AA book, pamphlets and other literature at cost. No raffles, solicitation, showers or awards shall be allowed. No card playing on meeting nights.
12. All complaints must be take up with the secretary or a member of the revolving committee bur not during meetings.

Jacksonville Group By-Laws (cont)

- 13. No Extraneous suggestions, alliances ,auxiliaries, arguments, debates or the discussion of the private life of any member or prospective member shall be allowed at meetings.
- 14. All money shall be collected by voluntary subscription from AA members only and turned over to the secretary.
- 15. New members shall be “seen and not heard” for three months after admittance. Before and after the meeting the new member may enter into discussion or and questions from older members.
- 16. At meetings coffee, coke, donuts and cookies, only, shall be served, purchased by the group.
- 17. No change or deviation from these By-Laws shall be made except by unanimous consent at a meeting called for such express purpose.
- 18.Procedure at meetings:

Jacksonville Group By-Laws (cont)

Secretary will introduce leader who shall be only speaker at meeting.

Leader shall offer short oral prayer.

Leader shall make a 30-45 minute talk.

Leader shall close meeting with Lord's prayer.

Secretary will open meeting for discussions, or questions only with leader, limit on time is 30-45 minutes.

No member shall be called by the leader for comment and no applause for speaker or anyone's comments.

Secretary to make announcements, if any and to announce closing of meetings.

Jacksonville Group “Suggestions”

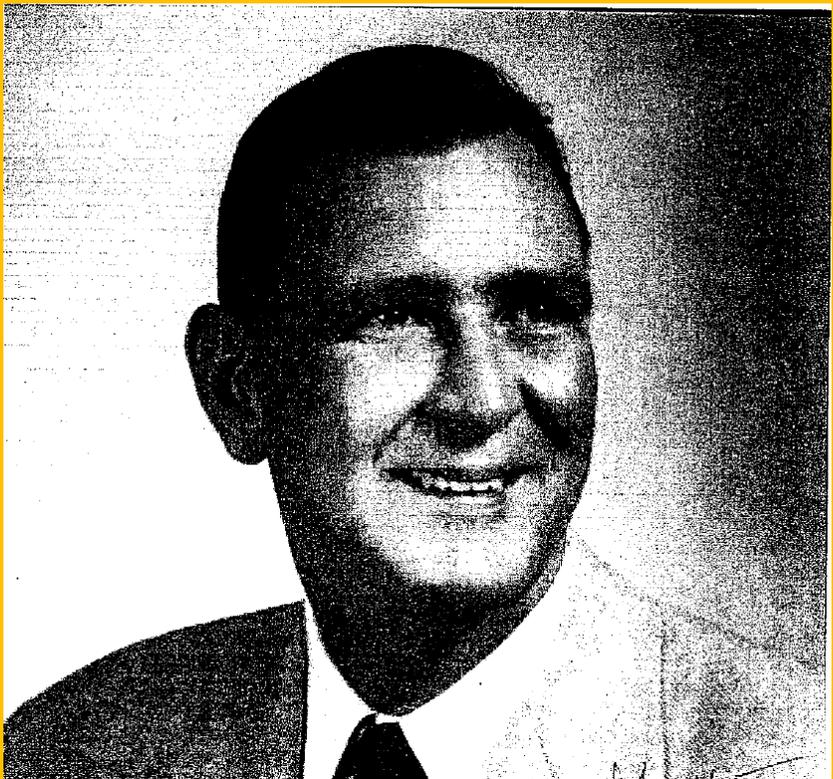
Encourage social gatherings at homes of members as social contact is important.

Be sure of good sponsorship after a thorough screening and investigation of a prospective member.

Encourage bringing prospective members to homes with other members invited before bringing to any meeting.

Endeavor to standardize hospitalization, hospital fees and doctor bills.

Encourage the reading of pamphlets, the re-reading of the AA book, the Sermon on the Mount, As a Man Thinketh, etc., and above all, the daily reading of “The Upper Room”.



In 1945 the corporation ALCOAN Inc. (to separate property & holdings from AA) was dissolved & was replaced with new charter ALANON Inc. The first alcoholic ladies came in to meetings with Wynell Justice in April 1947 & with Loraine Mathis in December 47 . This corporation is not to be confused with Al-Anon Family Groups they opened their first office in 1952. But their work was being done already through the likes of Henrietta Seiberling, and Marie Cotten

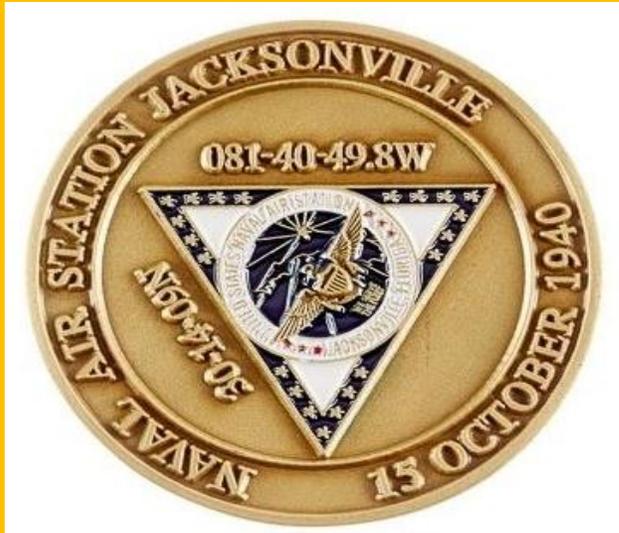
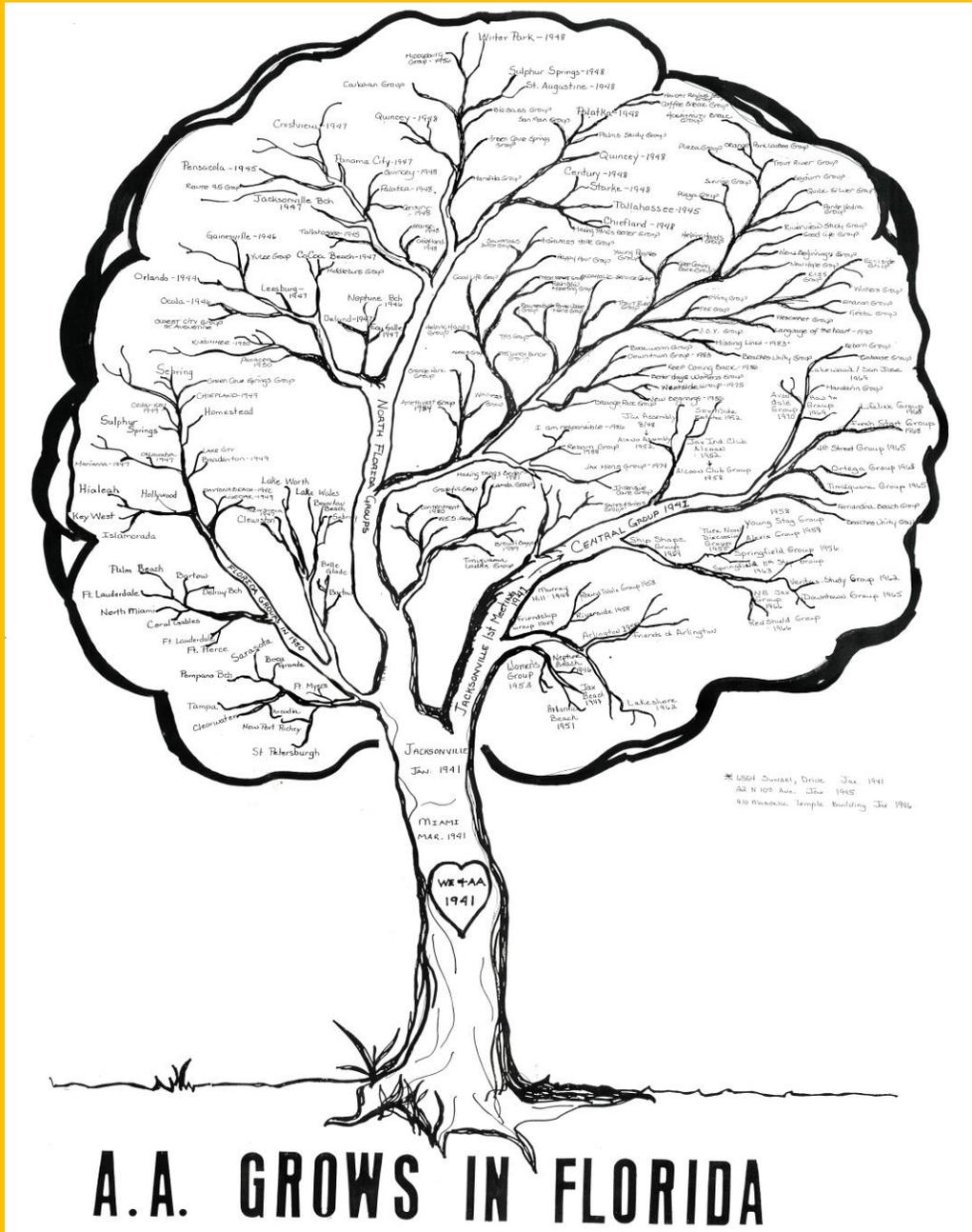
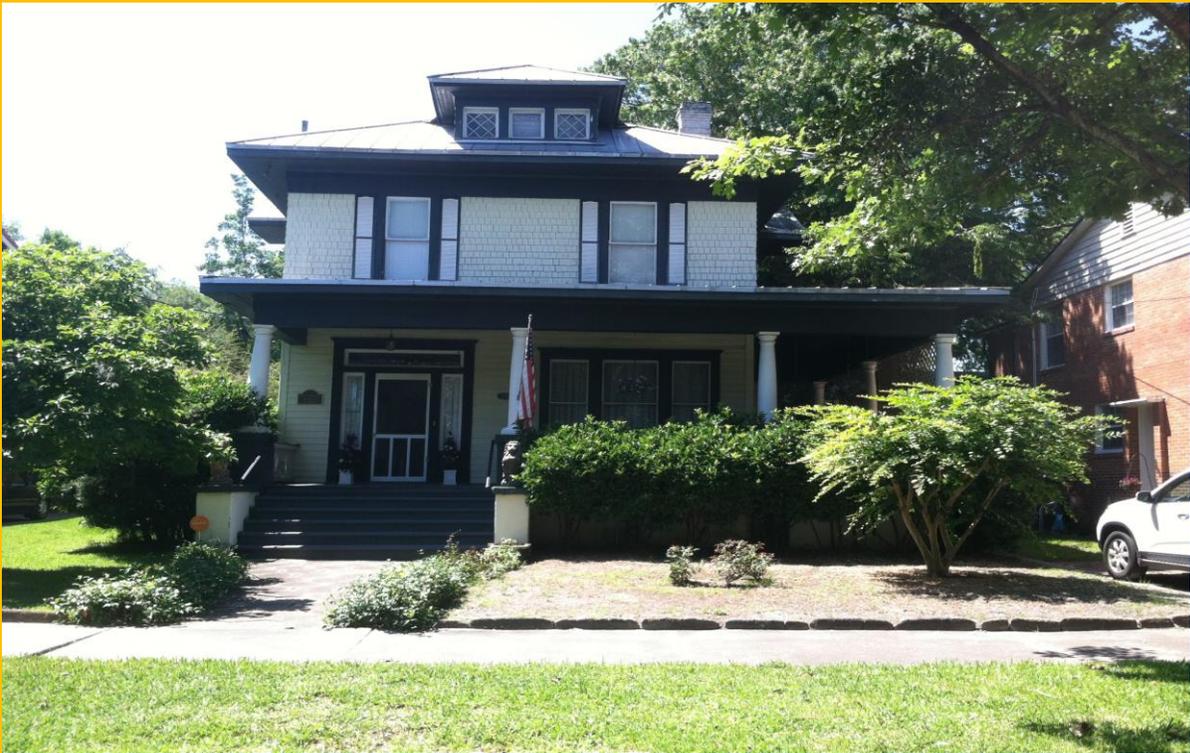


Tom S. was the very first member of the first Group registered at GSO. He also went on to serve as the 1st Delegate representing Florida at Panel 1 General Service Conference. Our 3rd Legacy in action.

And later he served as a class B trustee of A.A. Tom Sharpe passed in 1983. Giving all of himself for those of us that followed.



Tom Sharpe with Lois Wilson, cutting the ribbon on the opening on the Archives at the General Service Office (GSO) 1975



A.A. GROWS IN FLORIDA



**Thank you for allowing me to be “a Part of Alcoholics
Anonymous”
not “Apart from”
Happy 75th Anniversary**